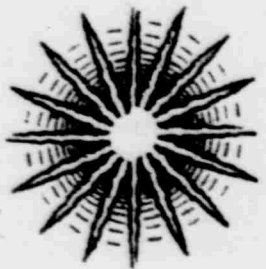


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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

(From 11th page.)

It is not possible to improvise a navy after war breaks out. The ships must be built and the men trained long in advance. Some auxiliary vessels can be turned into makeshifts which will do in default of any better for the minor work, and a proportion of raw men can be mixed with the highly trained, their shortcomings being made good by the skill of their fellows, but the efficient fighting force of the navy when pitted against an equal opponent will be found almost exclusively in the warships that have been regularly built and in the officers and men who through years of faithful performance of sea duty have been trained to handle their formidable but complex and delicate weapons with the highest efficiency. In the late war with Spain the ships that dealt the decisive blows at Manila and Santiago had been launched from two to fourteen years, and they were able to do as they did because the men in the conning towers, the gun turrets and the engine rooms had through long years of practice at sea learned how to do their duty.

Our present navy was begun in 1882. At that period our navy consisted of a collection of antiquated wooden ships already almost out of place against modern war vessels as the galleys of Alcibiades and Hamular, certainly as the ships of Tromp and Blake. Nor at that time did we have men fit to handle a modern man-of-war. Under the wise legislation of the congress and the successful administration of a succession of patriotic secretaries of the navy belonging to both political parties the work of upbuilding the navy went on, and ships equal to any in the world of their kind were continually added, and, what was even more important, these ships were exercised at sea singly and in squadrons until the men aboard them were able to get the best possible service out of them. The result was seen in the short war with Spain, which was decided with such rapidity because of the infinitely greater preparedness of our navy than of the Spanish navy.

The Part Played by Congress.

While awarding the fullest honor to the men who actually commanded and manned the ships which destroyed the Spanish sea forces in the Philippines and in Cuba, we must not forget that an equal credit of praise belongs to those without whom neither blow could have been struck. The congressmen who voted for years in advance the money to lay down the ships, to build the guns, to buy the armor plate, the department officials and the business men and workmen who furnished what the congress had authorized, the secretaries of the navy who asked for and expended the appropriations and finally the officers who in fair weather and foul on actual sea service trained and disciplined the crews of the ships when there was no war in sight—all are entitled to a full share in the glory of Manila and Santiago and the respect accorded by every true American to those who wrought such signal triumph for our country. It was forethought and preparation which secured us the overwhelming triumph of 1898. If we fail to show forethought and preparation now, there may come a time when disaster will befall us instead of triumph, and should this time come the fault will rest primarily not upon those whom the accident of events puts in supreme command at the moment, but upon those who have failed to prepare in advance.

There should be no cessation in the work of completing our navy. So far ingenuity has been wholly unable to devise a substitute for the great war craft whose hammering guns beat out the mastery of the high seas. It is unsafe and unwise not to provide this for several additional battleships and heavy armored cruisers, with auxiliary and lighter craft in proportion. For the exact numbers and character I refer you to the report of the secretary of the navy. But there is something we need even more than additional ships, and this is additional officers and men. To provide battleships and cruisers and then lay them up, with the expectation of leaving them unmanned until they are needed in actual war, would be worse than folly. It would be a crime against the nation.

More Men Required.

To send any warship against a competent enemy unless those aboard it have been trained by years of actual sea service, including incessant gunnery practice, would be to invite not merely disaster, but the bitterest shame and humiliation. Four thousand additional seamen and a thousand additional marines should be provided, and an increase in the officers should be provided by making a large addition to the classes at Annapolis. There is one small matter which should be mentioned in connection with Annapolis. The pretentious and unmeaning title of "naval cadet" should be abolished; the title of "midshipman," full of historic association, should be restored.

Even in time of peace a warship should be used until it wears out, for only so can it be kept fit to respond to any emergency. The officers and men alike should be kept as much as possible on blue water, for it is there only they can learn their duties as they should be learned. The big vessels should be maneuvered in squadrons containing not merely battleships, but the necessary proportion of cruisers and scouts. The torpedo boats should be handled by the younger officers in such manner as will best fit the latter to take responsibility and meet the emergencies of actual warfare.

Every detail ashore which can be performed by a civilian should be performed, the officer being kept for his special duty in the sea service. Above all, gunnery practice should be unceasing. It is important to have our navy of adequate size, but it is even more important that, ship for ship, it should equal in efficiency any navy in the world. This is possible only with highly drilled crews and officers, and this in turn imperatively demands continuous and progressive instruction in target practice, ship handling, squadron tactics and general discipline. Our ships must be assembled in squadrons actively cruising away from harbors and never long at anchor. The resulting wear upon engines and hulls must be endured. A battleship worn out in long training of officers and men is well paid for by the results, while, on the other hand, no matter in how excellent condition it is useless if the crew be not expert.

The Necessity of Drill.

We now have seventeen battleships appropriated for, of which nine are completed and have been commissioned for actual service. The remaining eight will be ready in from two to four years, but it will take at least a year to recruit and train the men to fight them. It is of vast concern that we have trained crews ready for the vessels by the time they are commissioned. Good ships and good guns are simply good weapons, and the best weapons are useless save in the hands of men who know how to deal with them. The men must be trained and drilled under a thorough and well planned system of progressive instruction, while the recruiting must be carried on with still greater vigor. Every effort must be made to exalt the main function of the officer—the command of men. The leading graduates of the Naval academy should be assigned to the combatant branches, the line and marines.

Many of the essentials of success are already recognized by the general board, which, as the central office of a growing staff, is moving steadily toward a proper war efficiency and a proper efficiency of the whole navy under the secretary. This general board, by fostering the creation of a general staff, is providing for the official and then the general recognition of our altered conditions as a nation and of the true meaning of a great war fleet, which meaning is, first, the best men, and second, the best ships.

The naval militia forces are state organizations and are trained for coast service, and in event of war they will constitute the inner line of defense. They should receive hearty encouragement from the general government. But, in addition, we should at once provide for a national naval reserve organized and trained under the direction of the navy department and subject to the call of the chief executive whenever war becomes imminent. It should be a reserve auxiliary to the naval seagoing peace establishment and offer material to be drawn on at once for manning our ship in time of war. It should be composed of graduates of the Naval academy, graduates of the naval militia, officers and crews of coast line steamers, longshore

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proved power of command and capacity to work well in the field. Constant care is necessary to prevent dry rot in the transportation and commissary departments.

Field Exercises Advocated.

Our army is so small and so much scattered that it is very difficult to give the higher officers (as well as the lower officers and the enlisted men) a chance to practice maneuvers in mass and on a comparatively large scale. In time of need no amount of individual excellence would avail against the paralysis which would follow inability to work as a coherent whole under skillful and daring leadership. The congress should provide means whereby it will be possible to have field exercises by at least a division of regulars and, if possible, also a division of national guardsmen once a year. These exercises might take the form of field maneuvers, or if on the gulf coast or the Pacific or Atlantic seaboard or in the region of the great lakes, the army corps when assembled could be marched from some inland point to some point on the water, there embarked, disembarked after a couple of days' journey at some other point and again marched inland. Only by actual handling and providing for men in masses while they are marching, camping, embarking and disembarking will it be possible to train the higher officers to perform their duties well and smoothly.

A great debt is owing from the public to the men of the army and navy. They should be so treated as to enable them to reach the highest point of efficiency so that they may be able to respond instantly to any demand made upon them to sustain the interests of the nation and the honor of the flag. The individual American enlisted man is probably on the whole a more formidable fighting man than the regular of any other army. Every consideration should be shown him, and in return the highest standard of usefulness should be exacted from him. It is well worth while for the congress to consider whether the pay of enlisted men upon second and subsequent enlistments should not be increased to correspond with the increased value of the veteran soldier.

Army Reorganization.

Much good has already come from the act reorganizing the army passed early in the present year. The three prime reforms, all of them of literally incalculable value, are, first, the substitution of four years' enlistment for the line for permanent appointments in the so-called staff divisions; second, the establishment of a corps of artillery with a chief at the head; third, the establishment of a maximum and minimum limit for the army. It would be difficult to overestimate the improvement in the efficiency of our army which these three reforms are making and have in part already effected.

The reorganization provided for by the act has been substantially accomplished. The improved conditions in the Philippines have enabled the war department materially to reduce the military charge upon our revenue and to arrange the number of soldiers so as to bring this number much nearer to the minimum than to the maximum limit established by law. There is, however, need of supplementary legislation. Thorough military education must be provided and in addition to the regulars the advantages of this education should be given to the officers of the national guard and others in civil life who desire intelligently to fit themselves for possible military duty. The officers should be given the chance to perfect themselves by study in the higher branches of this art. At West Point the education should be of the kind most apt to turn out men who are good in actual field service. Too much stress should not be laid on mathematics, nor should proficiency therein be held to establish the right to a corps d'elite. The typical American officer of the best kind need not be a good mathematician, but he must be able to master himself, to control others and to show boldness and fertility of resource in every emergency.

Action should be taken in reference to the militia and the raising of volunteer forces. Our militia law is obsolete and worthless. The organization and armament of the national guard of the several states, which are treated as militia in the appropriations by the congress, should be made identical with those provided for the regular forces. The obligations and duties of the guard in time of war should be carefully defined and a system established by law under which the method of procedure of raising volunteer forces should be prescribed in advance. It is utterly impossible in the excitement and haste of impending war to do this satisfactorily if the arrangements have not been made long beforehand. Provision should be made for utilizing in the first volunteer organizations called out the training of those citizens who have already had experience under arms, and especially for the selection in advance of the best of the volunteer forces which may be raised; for careful selection of the kind necessary is impossible after the outbreak of war.

That the army is not at all a mere instrument of destruction has been shown during the last three years. In the Philippines and in Porto Rico it has proved itself a great constructive force, a most potent implement for the upbuilding of a peaceful civilization.

The Veterans.

No other citizens deserve so well of the republic as the veterans, the survivors of those who saved the Union. They did the deed which if left undone would have meant that all else in our history went for nothing. But for their steadfast prowess in the greatest crisis of our history all our annals would be meaningless and our great experiment in popular freedom and self government a gloomy failure. Moreover, they not only left us a united nation, but they left us also as a heritage the memory of the mighty deeds by which the nation was kept united. We are now indeed one nation, one in fact as well as in name; we are united in our devotion to the flag which is the symbol of national greatness and unity, and the very completeness of our union enables us all, in every part of the country, to glory in the valor shown alike by the sons of the north and the sons of the south in the times that tried men's souls. The men who in the last three years have done so well in the East and in the West Indies and on the mainland of Asia have shown that the remembrance is not lost. In any serious crisis the United States must rely for the great mass of its fighting men upon the volunteer soldiery who do not make a permanent profession of the military career, and whenever such a crisis arises the deathless memories of the civil war will give to Americans the lift of lofty purpose which comes to those whose fathers have stood valiantly in the forefront of the battle.

The Merit System.

The merit system of making appointments is in its essence as democratic and American as the common school system itself. It simply means that in clerical and other positions where the duties are entirely technical and no favor, each standing on his merits as he is able to show them by practical test. Written competitive examinations offer the only available means in many cases for applying this system. In other cases, as where laborers are employed, a system of registration undoubtedly can be widely extended. There are, of course, places where the written competitive examination cannot be applied and others where it offers by no means an ideal solution, but where under existing political conditions it is, though an imperfect means, yet the best present means of getting satisfactory results.

Wherever the conditions have permitted the application of the merit system in its fullest and widest sense the gain to the

government has been immense. The navy yards and postal service illustrate probably better than any other branches of the government the great gain in economy, efficiency and honesty due to the enforcement of this principle.

I recommend the passage of a law which will extend the classified service to the District of Columbia or will at least enable the president thus to extend it. In my judgment all laws providing for the temporary employment of clerks should hereafter contain a provision that they be selected under the civil service law. It is important to have this system obtain at home, but it is even more important to have it applied rigidly in our insular possessions. Not an office should be filled in the Philippines or Porto Rico with any regard to the man's partisan affiliations or services, with any regard to the political, social or personal influence which he may have at his command. In short, heed should be paid to absolutely nothing save the man's own character and capacity and the needs of the service.

The administration of these islands should be as wholly free from the suspicion of partisan politics as the administration of the army and navy. All that we ask from the public servant in the Philippines or Porto Rico is that he render honor to his country by the way in which he makes that country's rule a benefit to the peoples who have come under it. This is all that we should ask, and we cannot afford to be content with less.

The merit system is simply one method of securing honest and efficient administration of the government, and in the long run the sole justification of any type of government lies in its proving itself both honest and efficient.

The Consular Service.

The consular service is now organized under the provisions of a law passed in 1855, which is entirely inadequate to existing conditions. The interest shown by so many commercial bodies throughout the country in the reorganization of the service is heartily commended to your attention. Several bills providing for a new consular service have in recent years been submitted to the congress. They are based upon the just principle that appointments to the service should be made only after a practical test of the applicant's fitness; that promotions should be governed by trustworthiness, adaptability and zeal in the performance of duty, and that the tenure of office should be unaffected by partisan considerations. The guardianship and fostering of our rapidly expanding foreign commerce, the protection of American citizens resorting to foreign countries in lawful pursuit of their affairs and the maintenance of the dignity of the nation abroad combine to make it essential that our consuls should

(Continued on 13th page)

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